

This memo is to recognize that the assessment practices that our department has employed for the past two decades are no longer statistically viable.

For the last twenty years, our assessment plan has centered on collecting papers from upper-division courses populated exclusively by Economics majors and minors. These papers were evaluated using a detailed, rubric-based system for each of our primary Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

- Write effectively
- Speak effectively
- Understand basic economic concepts
- Apply economic concepts to individual and social issues
- Apply quantitative tools to analyze individual and social issues
- Utilize basic computer skills
- Know the philosophical roots of the discipline
- Apply economic principles to good citizenship in the context of real-world issues

Each trait was scored on a scale from zero to four. Our intent was to analyze the time-series trends for each trait, allowing us to identify areas for pedagogical improvement and to enhance the student learning experience.

This plan was developed when the Economics Department had 17 faculty members and approximately 50-60 majors. During the last collection period, our department consisted of six faculty members and eight majors.

Consequently, the number of papers we can collect from our majors and minors is now far too small for the primary trait analysis to yield any reliable information. Any observed changes in the time-series data lack statistical significance, as there are simply not enough degrees of freedom to support meaningful conclusions.

Given this reality, the department must revise its assessment plan. We will be convening an ad-hoc committee to undertake a comprehensive review. This committee's first task will be to re-examine our SLOs to determine if they are still appropriate given our department's current size and mission.

A significant focus will be adapting our methods to our new constraints. We are forced to move at least some assessment activities into our larger service courses for non-majors, where we have class sizes approaching 35. The committee will be charged with rethinking what learning goals we can meaningfully monitor in this new context and, most importantly, how we can use that data to genuinely improve the student learning experience.

We will keep your office informed of the committee's progress and look forward to collaborating on a new, more effective assessment plan.